

home and community-based settings. We now know that we are not talking about merely a preference for non-institutional care—but a legal right to it.

In my capacity as ranking member of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, I have held numerous hearings on long-term care and the importance of supporting the continuum of care options. Assisted living is one of the most significant of these options and offers a real choice to those Americans wanting assistance outside of an institutional setting—a preference that will only grow as more of our baby boomers look for help with long-term care. Today, I salute the Louisiana Assisted Living Association for taking time to educate and improve awareness about a service that I believe can and will improve the lives of many of our Nation's disabled and elderly.●

HONORING KAREN MAYRY

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I stand today to recognize an individual who is a dedicated advocate for the blind in this Nation, and especially in my home State of South Dakota.

Karen was raised in Hibbing, MN. The second of five children, she learned at an early age to cope with people's afflictions. Her brother Robert was born with Down syndrome. It was from this early exposure that Karen gained some of the beliefs that would carry over in later life. At age 11, Karen, herself was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes—the disease that was to define the rest of her life.

In 1965, Karen married her long-time love, Marshall. While living in Tacoma, WA, where Marshall was to finish out his military obligation, Karen found a job teaching in the Clover Park school system. In her first year on the job, she experienced her first hemorrhage in her right eye which resulted in complete vision loss in that eye. Because of her love of educating children, she remained on the job teaching despite experiencing a traumatic physical ailment.

Marshall and Karen moved to Denver, CO after his military obligation was fulfilled. While in Denver, Karen lost still more of her vision and for all purposes became “totally blind” and underwent eye surgery with the hope of restoring some vision to her right eye. The surgery was deemed a cosmetic failure. It was also at this time, that doctors discovered that she was beginning to experience renal failure.

In 1969, Karen and Marshall moved to Rapid City where she was hired on as a Juvenile Probation officer. She remained at the position for 6 years until her renal failure had continued to progress so much that she was no longer able to continue her duties. Experiencing kidney failure soon after, her loving brother, David, offered one of his kidneys. After many months of complications delaying the surgery, the transplant was successful. Three weeks later, she left the hospital and

her kidney functions have remained excellent for the past 27 years.

Following the successful kidney treatment, she was approached by representatives of National Federation of the Blind to become a member. The philosophy of the NFB matched her own; one of independence and the abilities of blind persons, if given a chance. Soon after joining, she became active that same year and was elected state president, a quite remarkable accomplishment.

Karen Mayry is the long-time president of the South Dakota Federation of the Blind. For many years, she has provided tireless advocacy for the blind residents of South Dakota and for the disabled population of the State. Under her presidency the State affiliate has grown to five local chapters. She has proposed and lobbied for and had legislation passed bettering the lives of blind South Dakotans. She has testified before the Senate, investigating transportation for the handicapped and has annually made trips to our Nation's Capital to lobby for issues of importance to the blind of the country.

She is dedicated to advocating issues of importance, and she is committed to breaking down the structural and attitudinal barriers that impact the blind and disabled community in south Dakota. Her list of organizations is vast and her accomplishments and awards are countless.

Despite various physical ailments in recent years, Karen refuses to be sidelined and continues her stalwart advocacy. Her vitality and energy is commendable and her advocacy and education over the years on issues affecting blind and disabled individuals have proven very successful. She works hard to educate and advocate for the Americans with Disabilities Act, helps promote the skills and talents of the blind and educates the business community about the importance of hiring individuals with disabilities.

South Dakotans with disabilities have many fighters in their corner, and Karen Mayry is one of their most ardent advocates. Karen doesn't mince words with elected officials, I, for one, have appreciated her frankness and candor over the years. Her insight is valuable on important issues, not only on matters directly affecting blind residents, but also in issues vital to all South Dakotans, disabled and non-disabled alike.

As residents in my State prepare for the annual South Dakota Federation of the Blind Convention in Sioux Falls, I take this opportunity to congratulate and commend Karen Mayry for her many years of outstanding advocacy work for the blind. I applaud her dedication and commitment, appreciate her advocacy, and wish her the best in her own individual battle to come. I look forward to continuing my work with Karen concerning issues of importance to the blind and disabled citizens of south Dakota. It is with great honor that I share her impressive accomplishments with my colleagues.●

CONGRATULATING ALISA BARTON

● Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I would like to take the opportunity to honor Mrs. Alisa Barton of Hopkinsville, KY. Salvation Army welfare coordinator Alisa Barton was honored nationwide with an Award of Excellence in Social Service at the National Social Services Conference in Pittsburgh on Tuesday, March 20.

As former military child and wife, Mrs. Barton knows firsthand the hardship Army families can experience, especially during times of deployment. Mrs. Barton has continuously worked to help alleviate the needs of families remaining at home while their loved ones serve this country in Afghanistan and Iraq.

She developed a program called Homefront War Relief, which has received national recognition for helping the families of deployed Fort Campbell soldiers. The Homefront War Relief program, partnered with Wal-Mart, allowed the Salvation Army to assist 743 military families resulting in the largest military assistance effort the Salvation Army of Hopkinsville has ever done. Throughout 2003, 5,000 military personnel and their families received assistance in the form of comfort kits to deployed soldiers, food and clothing, holiday meals, and Bibles and inspirational books to troops.

Mrs. Barton is dedicated to helping those who come to the Salvation Army in need. She began working with the Salvation Army by ringing donations bells and describes her work as a labor of love spreading the Christian faith and helping people. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Mrs. Barton. She is a wonderful asset to Kentucky and an inspiration to us all.●

CONGRATULATING MARSHALL ALL-STAR CHEERLEADERS

● Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I would like to take the opportunity to honor the Marshall All-Star Cheerleaders for their recent success at the national championships in Indianapolis.

The Marshall All-Star Cheerleaders is made up of girls from grades 1–12 competing in three age levels, Peewee grades 1–4, Youth 3–6, and Senior 6–12. They are from Marshall, Graves, Lyon, and McCracken counties and students at Melissa's Gymnastics in Benton, KY.

The squads spent hours in preparation for the fierce competition they faced in Indianapolis. Other squads were from Indiana, Kansas, Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia, Maryland, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Kentucky. They competed in dance, cheering, and tumbling, and came out on top in the end.

The Marshall All-Star Cheerleaders were the national champions in all three age levels. They are to be commended for this high honor. Their hard work and dedication paid off, and I join

my fellow Kentuckians in congratulating these fine young ladies.●

JUAN MEJIA

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am pleased to recognize Juan Mejia for his achievement in becoming the Tulare County spelling bee champion and his entrance into the prestigious National Spelling Bee in Washington D.C.

Juan was born in Guzman, Mexico and moved to the United States when he was a year and a half old. He learned English while attending pre-school at a Head Start Program at Sundale School. Continuing on to Kohn Elementary he distinguished himself as a bright and motivated student and was accepted into the GATE program for gifted students. Now at Live Oak Middle School he continues to excel in his studies and extra-curricular activities.

Juan Mejia's achievement in the Tulare County Spelling Bee is particularly notable because of his late introduction to the English language. By working hard and using all available resources, Juan overcame an educational barrier to become a master of the English language. For his focus, fortitude and determined work, I congratulate him and wish him the best of luck in the National Spelling Bee in Washington D.C. Regardless of the outcome in the National Spelling Bee, Juan Mejia is a tremendous success and a worthy example of how challenges can be met and overcome with focused effort and perseverance.●

IN RECOGNITION OF DOUG HARRISON

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am pleased to recognize Doug Harrison's lifetime of service to the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, and most importantly, the people of Fresno County.

In 1970, Doug Harrison began a career with the FMFCD. He served as general manager for 31 years. Mr. Harrison led the effort that designed and implemented a storm drainage system that ended regular flooding which had plagued residences and businesses for generations. Under his leadership, the construction of flood retention basins throughout the Fresno-Clovis metropolitan area became part of a network of groundwater recharge facilities, and in recent years Mr. Harrison led efforts to work with community groups, such as Tree Fresno, to landscape many of these facilities. The result has been the protection of property, replenishment of vital groundwater resources and beautiful greenspace, as well as recreational facilities at many basins.

Mr. Harrison is an exemplary public servant, who has worked tirelessly for a broad constituency. He has made the lives of many people better. His innovation, energy and dedication will be missed. To him, I say thank you. He is a public servant in the best and truest sense of the word.●

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY BASKETBALL TEAM

● Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I commend the Kennesaw State University Owls basketball team for winning its first NCAA Division II national championship title. In the 84-59 victory over Southern Indiana, the Owls showed great poise. After the Screaming Eagles sprinted to an eight-point lead, the Owls settled down, regained the lead and never lost it. The team, which moved up to the NCAA Division II Peach Belt Conference in 1994, took the championship in only their second appearance at the NCAA Division II national tournament.

The title capped a 35-4 season record, which had ended with a 26-game winning streak and the Peach Belt championship.

I commend Coach Tommy Ingle, his assistant coaches Jeff Jones and Stace Tedford, for developing and leading this strong team of student athletes. Coach Ingle was able to take the team to a national title in only his second year at the helm. That is extremely impressive.

I also want to praise the players themselves, including seniors Reggie McCoy, Terrence Hill, and Justin Thompson for displaying leadership, determination, skill and sportsmanship. This young basketball squad has already made its mark in college basketball.

In addition to their basketball performance, the Fighting Owls have demonstrated the personal qualities that make them a credit to one of Georgia's great institutes of higher learning, and a credit to the great State of Georgia as well.●

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF ASSUMPTION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute to Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, the second Greek Orthodox congregation to be formed in the state of Michigan. Events celebrating the 75th anniversary of Assumption Church began in 2003 and will continue in 2004 with a grand banquet to be held on April 24. These events bring together members of the congregation, as well as thousands of others from throughout the metropolitan Detroit area and around the country, to mark this milestone in the history of Assumption Church.

At the turn of the century, many Greek immigrants settled in cities and towns across the nation. Greek immigrants established a thriving community in Detroit, in what has become known as Greektown. Seventy-five years ago, seven men from the growing Greek community on Detroit's "eastside" met to lay plans for a parochial school and a place of worship that would be close to their homes. They sought to continue the tradition of teaching the Greek language and history to their community. In 1930, with

the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople, the first Church Council established the Assumption Church at Hillger and Kercheval in Detroit. The Church was formally named "Koimisis tis Theotokou" meaning "The Dormition of the Virgin Mary."

The Church experienced steady growth in both the number of families that joined the parish and the number of new programs that served the needs of the parishioners. Beginning with its first Greek school "Socrates," the Church added various programs for its youth, women, and senior citizens, and continued to expand its philanthropic and religious outreach. The parishioners' reputation as a thriving, caring congregation grew and attracted families from Detroit's suburbs and beyond. Today, more than 1,200 families belong to Assumption Church, making it the largest parish in the region and one of the largest parishes in the Archdiocese.

The Assumption Greek Orthodox Church family moved several times over the years before building the current facilities in St. Clair Shores, which include the notable Assumption Cultural Center. They built churches at Beniteau and Vernor Highway and on Charlevoix that serve Protestant congregations today. Like these stalwart structures that are reminders of the congregation's vision and faithfulness, Assumption's spiritual leaders have been significant pillars in the community. The first priest, Father Christopher Makris, arrived in Detroit from Chicago. His service was followed by 11 clergy leaders and several laity, who have been represented in the highest positions of service nationally in matters of religious education, stewardship, athletics, the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical festival and various missionary activities. Father Demetrios Kavadas provided spiritual leadership for 39 years and is Assumption's longest serving clergyman. In 2003, Father Epihanios Perialas became interim pastor and honored the parish through his elevation to Metropolitan of Spain and Portugal. Father Michael Varlamos became pastor in 2003 and continues to serve in that capacity today. Unfortunately, the Church experienced a devastating fire on December 21, 2002, that destroyed the interior of the Church along with its beautiful iconography. The Church was promptly restored and re-opened its doors almost one year to the day, in December 2003.

I know my colleagues join me in congratulating the congregation of Assumption Greek Orthodox Church for achieving 75 years of devotion to God, their faith, and excellence in serving their members and the surrounding communities.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.